

Thelma May (Sandstad) Personius interview
by Deborah Nicolls for the
Sacramento History Center SECS
Nov. 15, 1983

Note: Information in parenthesis has been added by interviewer for the purpose of clarification.

SIDE A

- 0 Thelma was born at the White Hospital in Sacramento in (1921) then her family moved to an aspararagus ranch in Delta.
- 1:00 Her family then moved to Mills, where her sister Bernice was born in 1924. They lived there $1\frac{1}{2}$ years on a prune ranch.
- 2:00 Then the family moved to Lincoln and stayed there until 1931, (when her father, Einar Sandstad, died). During this time her sister Grace was born. Her father managed the Gladding Mc-Bean Ranch there.
- 3:00 The Norseman's way--Making someone feel needed to give them dignity. Her moster's brothers, Leif and Alfred, ask her mother to move in with them to take care of the house.
- 4:00 Einar Sandstad had been born in Stern, Norway. Her mother Holdis Owre came from Ytteroy, Norway about 1913.
- 5:00 Holdish came from Norway to take care of her brothers after their sister Volberg had married. Her passage was paid by Knut Sandstad.
- 6:00 Alfred Owre came to Sacramento in 1902, Leif around 1904. Their passage was also paid by Knut Sandstad. Everyone paid him back.
- 7:00 Leif and Alfred farmed the area from Walerga Station in the north to the American River in the south, Ben Ali Crossing in the west to Folsom.
- 8:00 Leif initially worked for Ben Ali Haggin, taking care of his racehorses. He had an understanding with animals.
- 8.00 The first house was near where Carmichael Park is.
- 9:00 The brothers begin to dry farm oat hay and grain. They purchased land at corner of Winding Way and Pasadena where the SDA Church is located. The house they built is still standing.
- 10:00 The brothers wanted to experiment with the land to find out what was most suitable to grow in Carmichael.

- 10:00 They planted Phillip Cling peaches, 5 variety of almonds, citrus trees and olive trees to serve as a wind break on the north. Her uncles farmed with Percheron horses.
- 12:00 The family cooperated with the neighbors; the Fergusons were Scots, the Barretts were English, and the Winges were Norwegian. They were a close-knit group who helped each other out.
- 13:00 The ranch house and many of the outbuildings were built in 1912 by Frank Erickson. (Actually, it was probably Axel Erickson. Frank was one of his sons.) The Ericksons were Swedes.
- 14:00 The duties of Thelma and her sisters; Grace helped her mother in the kitchen. Bearnice and Thelma worked outside. Stacked hay, stored grain, milked cows, fed horses, cleaned barns.
- 16:00 Labor not divided by sex. Everyone did what was necessary when it was necessary. Thelma's uncles very helpful to other people, would let their own work go to help others.
- 18:00 Carmichael in the 1930s and '40s was one big family. Everyone cooperated for the sake of survival.
- 19:00 Other Norwegians in area included the Winges, Osterlis, Hauges, Barasses, Sandsors, Jorstad, and Sandstads.
- 20:00 Norwegians were taught to respect those who had achieved a position of respect, even old school friends.
- 22:00 They took much pride in singing Norway's National Anthem and Star-Spangled Banner.
- 23:00 Her uncles and others would start playing their violins at six in the morning on May 17 (Norwegian Independence Day) and July 4th. The day was devoted to food, games for all ages.
- 24:00 At Christmas, a tree is set up in the center of a room and everybody holds hands and walks around the tree, singing Christmas carols. This was at church, in Sons of Norway, and at home. Celebration was held on Christmas Eve with smorgasbord and gift opening. Christams Day was spent in Church.
- 26:00 Birthdays were a special event for the person celebrating one. The whole house was decorated and the American and Norwegian flags were raised.
- 27:00 Another characteristic of the Norwegians. They were very tolerant of children and youth, believing that this was the time to make mistakes. They exercised tender, loving care and a firm hand and voice.
- 29:00 Leif Owre invovled with Bethel Lutheran Church and the Good Shepard Lutheran Church.

SIDE B

- 31:00 Leif Owre very involved with the organization of a Boys Scout Troop, #99, within the Bethel Lutheran congregation. initially the congregation was unwilling.
- 32:00 Leif on the Boys Scout council and a scoutmaster during WWII.
- 33:00 He held the pre-Camporee activity at the ranch. Leif received the Lutheran Lamb Award and the Silver Beaver award and was made Honorary Chief of the Golden Arrow.
- 34:00 Leif helped within the church where ever he was needed.
- 36:00 Scouts would hold a father-son banquet where the men would prepare the meal.
- 36:00 Events within the Sons of Norway included a fish dinner, featuring herring and boiled potatoes, a lutefish dinner (lutefisk is a whate fish prepared with calcium carbonate), and a smorgasbord, which was a big fund raiser.
- 38:00 The Norwegian men were good cooks. Both men and women were taught to be self-reliant
- 39:00 Club picnics were held on the ranch or at Del Paso Park.
- 40:00 The church did not approve of dancing or drinking and one of the Pastors, Roe, bleieved that Sons of Norway fostered drinking and carousing.
- 42:00 Thelma finished high school then went to work at McClellan Air Bases in 1943 where she worked as a mechanic in the propellar shop. She also worked for the D.M.V. and in sales and as a lingerie model at Weinstocks-Lubins.
- 45:00 She then went to work for the Johansons, Just and Stanley, who were photographers. They did not work together. She managed the businesses. In 1957 Just Johansen's Studio was on 11th street near the Cathedral. Today the buisness is located at 1125 J St. It is no longer owned by a Johansen. Johansen was a Norwegian who had gotten his start working for McCurrys. The members of Sons of Norway took their buisness to him when he went into buisness for himself.
- 48:00 Thelma believes that Stanley Johansen, Just's son was the true artist.
- 50:00 She believes that the Norwegians in Sacramento did not meet with any prejudice because they made it a point to speak English. Until Phelma went to school her parents spoke only Norwegian.